

Date sent: n.d. aft 13 December 1554¹

Date received:

From [person]: John Bale

To [person]: Thomas Ashley

From [place]: ?Frankfurt

To [place]: ?Duisburg

Original language: English

Transcript of Contemporary copy²

Ref: Inner Temple Library, London, Petyt MSS, 538/47 fos 380r-v

Other Versions: Abbreviated version, J. Strype *Ecclesiastical Memorials* 1721 ed III 107-9 xxxix; [1824 ed. III i 408; ii 313f xxxix.]³

[Top fo. 380r] The Copie of a letter wrytten by John Bale from Basil directed unto Mr Ashley in the tyme of Queene Mary. Wherin is declared the trobles and controversies of those tymes between the Protestants and the Purytanes. Ano 1556.⁴

My spetiall freind Mr Ashley after my accustomed salutations in the Lorde. This shalbe to assure you I have receved your gentle letters. I am very ioyous ...[faded]⁵ for that you are now willinge⁶ to resort unto us. And wheras you desier before your commynge to

¹ See separate section on re-dating of this document.

² This is a sixteenth century copy of Bale's letter in a volume [Petyt MS 538/47]. which contains items from John Foxe's Library, J. Conway Davies *Catalogue of Inner Temple MSS* 2 vols Vol I Intro pp 43-4.

³ Strype's version contains some minor scribal errors and different punctuation, plus one whole section has been excised, see notes below.

⁴ The heading has been added by the copyist. This letter has been discussed by L.P. Fairfield *John Bale* 102-3 & notes; Garrett 73-4; P. Collinson *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1967) 33.

⁵ Strype 'I am joyful'

⁶ Strype 'willing now'

know the estate of our Church.⁷ To be playne in fewe wordes it is troblouse at this p[re]sent. I fynd the admonishment of St Pawle to Timothe and of St Peter to the disp[er]sed brethren most true and in full force in this miserab[le] age. They sayde that in the latter tymes should come mockers, lyers, blasphemers and fearce dispisers,⁸ we have them, wee have them Mr Ashley, we have them even from amonge our selves yea they be at this present our Elders and their fact[ious] [torn MS] affinitie.⁹ Whan we requier to have com[m]om prayer¹⁰ according to our Englishe order, they tell us that the Magistrates will in no casse suffer it, w[hi]ch is a mos[t] manifest lye.¹¹ They mock the rehersall of Godes Commandements and of the Epistles and Gospels in our com[m]union and saye they are myspaced.¹² They blasphe[me] our com[m]union calling it a popishe masse and saye, that it hath a popish face w[i]th other fearce despisinges and cursed speakings.¹³ These mockes [torn MS word missing] and these blasphemies w[i]th such lyke, they take for invincyble theologie w[i]th the[se - torn MS] they buyld w[i]th these they boast, w[i]th these they tryumphe in erecting their church of the purytie.¹⁴ But wheras they report our com[m]union to have a popishe face I desier you to marke that w[hi]ch followeth here and to iudge their impudenty.¹⁵

⁷ Thomas Ashley was proposing to come to Frankfurt either directly from Duisburg or via Strassburg as Richard Cox appeared to have done.

⁸ The biblical reference is probably, 2 Tim 3 3.

⁹ Bale's opponents were the Knox-Whittingham group who at this stage were dominant in the Frankfurt controversy.

¹⁰ Strype 'Common Prayers'. Bale meant the 1552 edition of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

¹¹ One of the arguments used by the Frankfurt congregation's letters to the English exiles at Strassburg and in their negotiations with Grindal and Chambers, see 3 & 13 Dec 1554 [DD/PP/839 41-2; *Troubles* xxiii-xxvii]

¹² The dispute was over the position of the Ten Commandments and the Epistle and Gospel readings within the Communion service.

¹³ This appears to be the first use of the 'face' metaphor which was later used by Cox and Knox.

¹⁴ The phrase 'church of the purytie' links this letter directly to the 'Catharytes' memo.

¹⁵ Strype 'impudenty'. The following section of Bale's letter seems to be his notes refuting his opponents' points with a refrain 'which we have not' or similar to accompany each point. The 'Catharytes' memo followed a similar format.

The face of a popish masse is a¹⁶ shew of the whole action with the instrument¹⁷ [faded MS] and cermonies therunto apperteininge. To that face cheifly belongeth a monstrous brothell or Ape of Antichrist with shaven crowne¹⁸, syde gow[n] [torn MS] oyled¹⁹ thombes, typet, portasse and mase booke, our communion hathe none suche. [torn MS] To that face apperteineth an autre which we have not. To that face belongeth a sup[er] altare a chal[ice] [torn MS] a cover or cake; a corporasse, crualter²⁰, candlesticks, sencers and light [torn MS]²¹ which we have none. To that face belongeth vestiment, chisable,²² amy[ce] [torn MS] albe, gyrdle, stole, fa? or²³, aulltertrecloth,²⁴ torch and towell besydes the holy suffrages for pope, fo[r] pestilence and for old meseled swyne, w[hi]ch our communion hath not.²⁵ *To that face belongeth a disguysed lubber [?] his arse to the people as in the sacrifices of the old idolatours our commun[ion] [torn MS] sendeth fourth a godly minister, having his countenaunce towardes the people and utteringe the trewe word of God in the mother tonge. To that face belongeth face belongeth [sic] Latyn m[um?]berings without fru?et tornynges and halfe turninges, crossings hand washings drye drear?ings downe dropp[ing] [torn MS] and upstartings which we have not. To that face belongeth singer [?] blessinges, mouth breathings, tragicall transubstantiating or newe [faded MS] maticall creatings which we have not. To that face belongeth a ? st standinge, stoupinges, knelinges, knockinges, adoringe, salutinges, [faded MS] breakinges, maunchinges, drinkinges, sippinges, thombe lychings [faded MS] after grace

¹⁶ Strype 'the'

¹⁷ Strype plural 'instruments'

¹⁸ Strype 'crowns'

¹⁹ Strype 'oyl in'

²⁰ Strype 'cruats', that is crewets.

²¹ Strype plural 'lights'

²² Strype 'crisable'

²³ Strype no word here

²⁴ Strype 'altar-cloth'

²⁵ Strype omits section between *

with a boye to answer for all the parish, no part of the [torn MS] our english communion.* What may then be thought of our unnaturall bastardly bretheren that so falsely report yt,²⁶ so maliciously mocke so unlearnedly lye upon, so seditiously slaunder it, so wickedly blas [torn MS²⁷] it and so villainously [lost at bottom of page]²⁸ [fo. 380v]

Our communion on the other syde beginneth with prayer unto God in the mother tounge so doth not the masse.²⁹ It sheweth us the comaundments of God, it teacheth us the necessary articles of our christian fayth; so doth not the Masse. It bringeth both the lawe and the gospel to shew us both damnation and redemption, so doth not the masse; yt moveth us to acknowledge our synnes it stireth us up to repentance for them, yt exhortheth us to the³⁰ mortification of our synfull fleshe so doth not the masse. It preacheth the Lordes death till he come, it calleth for a worthie preparation to³¹ so hevenly a supper it promyseth full remyssiion of our synnes through Christes paynfull³² sufferinges so doth not the popishe masse. It geveth high thanks unto God for our free³³ redemption in Christe³⁴, it prayseth his³⁵ eternall Majestie for the same and wisheth the trewe receivers to departe from thens in his most holy peace and pertpetuall blessinge and contynew always, so doth not the abhomynable masse.

²⁶ Probably a reference to the Latin description of the *Book of Common Prayer* sent by Whittingham and Knox to Calvin, 11 Dec 1554 [DD/PP/839 65-8; *Calv Op.* xv No 2059]

²⁷ Strype 'blaspheme'

²⁸ Strype 'contemn it.'

²⁹ This section listed all the differences between the Mass and the English Communion service and used the refrain 'so doth not the masse'.

³⁰ Strype omits 'the'

³¹ Strype 'for' instead of 'to'

³² Strype 'gainful' for 'paynfull'

³³ Strype omits 'free'

³⁴ Strype omits 'in Christe'

³⁵ Strype 'the' for 'his'

Ergo our holy com[m]union hathe not the face of a popishe masse as our new Catharytes³⁶ hath most wickedly, malyciously, mockingly, falsely, frantyckly, unlearnedly, lewdly³⁷, sediciously, blaspemously, and beastly have reported and wrytten to their affinitie or proselytes raginge and raylinge more like Athenians than Christians yea, more lyke devills then men. And they boast of the glory of God, of sinceritie of his worde, and of the highest puritie in religyon. But the truthe of it is, they seeke to set up in their ydlenes (as they are all ydle savinge in this one³⁸ poynte) a seditious sacte³⁹ in contempte of the Englishe order, for their owne pharisaycall advau[n]cement plantinge the forsayd lyes, mockings⁴⁰ and blasphemeyes as the first prynciples of their buylding. This wryte I unto you, that they should not in this behalfe pervert you, as they have done other men. I would not in the mean tyme that this should discourage from com[m]yng towards us, but that you might come the soner w[i]th other good men, to helpe to repress their malycious and ydle enterpryses.⁴¹ Thus though wee be not in England amonge the wicked papists now, yet are wee molested of ydle bretheren, as wickely occupied as they, though in an other kynd, the tymes are perilous.⁴² Thus farewel in the Lord, and commend us to al our good brethren.

³⁶ Bale referred to his opponents as 'Catharytes', linking this letter directly to his 'Catharytes' Memo.

³⁷ Strype 'loudly' for 'lewdly'

³⁸ Strype omits 'one'

³⁹ Strype 'faction' for 'sacte'

⁴⁰ Strype 'mocking'

⁴¹ Bale was making a clear call for reinforcements to come to Frankfurt to overcome his opponents.

⁴² Though Bale frequently used exaggerated language, the comparison between his current opponents and the Roman Catholics demonstrated that he was extremely disillusioned with the situation in Frankfurt.